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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 28, 2009

In Today's Papers

'This is Real Change' (Milliyet)
Media outlets feature U.S. President Barack Obama's interview with Al-Arabiya in flashy headlines focusing on the same quotation from the interview. Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak, leftist Taraf, liberal Radikal, and Islamist-oriented Zaman all quote Obama in the same headline, "Americans Are Not The Enemies of Muslims." Mainstream Milliyet reports, "This Is Real Change," as Obama promises "We Are Not the Enemy of Muslims," and he says "Yes to contacts with Iran." Mainstream Sabah notes Obama said, "Yes, We Made Mistakes." Mainstream Hurriyet alludes to Obama's family ties to Islam in the headline, "An Initiative to Iran from 'Husseini,'" in a reference to Obama's middle name.

In a related story, Yeni Safak carries the headline, "Listen to Arabs," and reports, "George Mitchell is embarking on a tour of the Middle East in order to do more listening than talking."

Ozdemir Ince wrote in mainstream Hurriyet: "President Obama exemplifies the spirit of Abraham Lincoln by pursuing a unifying tone without discriminating against any ethnic or religious groups in the United States of America. This is just the kind of unifying rhetoric Turkey needs."

Murat Yetkin wrote in liberal-intellectual Radikal: "The Turkish government, particularly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is working toward eliminating PM Erdogan's harsh rhetoric over the Hamas/Gaza issue. Both FM Babacan and State Minister Cicek used significant language to soften Turkey's stance over the Israel-Palestine dispute. These efforts seek to put the train back onto its track."

Erdal Safak wrote in mainstream Sabah: "Turkey has acted as a bridge on the Gaza issue by conveying messages from countries and organizations which are isolated by the U.S. Therefore, the new Washington administration will appreciate it at some point. We can expect a positive outcome from the meeting between President Obama and PM Erdogan April 2nd at the G-20 summit."

Erdogan and Baykal Address Mid East Conflict, Ergenekon

Investigation

Media outlets report Prime Minister Erdogan told his party group meeting Tuesday that, during the World Economic Forum Meeting in Davos, he will remind Israeli President Shimon Peres of his stated commitment to "the privatization of democracy and peace." Erdogan said, "I'll tell Peres 'you defended the privatization of democracy, but the Israeli move in Gaza was conducted entirely with a totalitarian and authoritarian mentality.'"

Opposition CHP leader Deniz Baykal noted during yesterday's meeting with his party lawmakers that in 2006, the EU placed Hamas on its terror list. Baykal noted, "The PKK is on the same (terror) list. Turkey is paying for PM Erdogan's love for Hamas." Baykal also warned the government regarding procedural conduct in the Ergenekon investigation, "Silivri must not become the AKP's Guantanamo Detention Center. The Ergenekon investigation has violated the principle of privacy; this is lynch justice." In addition, Baykal noted, "The Ergenekon case has no relation to the 'clean hands operation,' because Turkey is already under the direction of dirty hands."

Roles Changing in Davos

Media note that the mood in Davos is experiencing an historical change this year as many of the nations attending the summit have departed from Davos' philosophy of free trade in order to intervene in their own economies to save their countries from the effects of the global economic crisis. Mainstream Sabah calls the Summit, "The Most Important Economic Summit of the Last 40 Years." Conservative nationalist Bugun reports, "The 2009 Davos Agenda Begins with the Economic Crisis." Mainstream Hurriyet carries the headline, "The

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CEOs Who Laid Off 85 Thousand People Are Flying to Davos" as "in the last two days, CEOs from the world's largest companies have laid off 85,000 people." Meral Tamer of mainstream Milliyet notes, "In 2009 national politics will direct the world economy," which constitutes "a first in the 39-year history of Davos."

A Nabucco Coup against Russia (Turkiye)

Mainstream Sabah notes, "The EU is looking to transfer 2 billion dollars to the project." In addition, Sabah reports Guler said, "Turkey's stance is quite clear - Turkey can work very fast in the project as long as other partners get a move on it." Guler also said the project was "important for Europe's energy security and strategy." He said the Nabucco project should be "initiated and completed in the shortest time possible." The paper also reports Hungary's Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsany, as the host of the conference, said "the EU should help finance Nabucco because it was a matter of national security and not a commercial project," and "The EU should allocate 2 billion Euros for the project." Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak reports in "Nabucco Depends on Turkey," that Turkey's Energy Minister Hilmi Guler said "Turkey will contribute to Europe's security of supply for natural gas with the completion of this project." Yeni Safak also reports "Turkey reiterated its support to Nabucco," and noted, "Turkey's energy minister said on Tuesday that intergovernmental agreement regarding the Nabucco project could be signed in Istanbul, Turkey in the first half of 2009." Conservative nationalist Turkiye reports in "A Nabucco Coup Against Russia," that the pipeline will reduce Europe's dependence on Russia for natural gas supplies because "it is necessary for Europe to protect itself from the natural gas threat," from a Russian natural gas monopoly in the region.

Mullen: Intel Sharing Between U.S.-Turkey Will Continue

Most media outlets covered U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Chair Admiral Mike Mullen's comments at the Foreign Press Center yesterday. Coverage was focused, in a somewhat relieved manner, on Mullen's assurance that the counterterrorism intelligence sharing mechanism between the U.S. and Turkey will continue under the Obama Administration. Conservative nationalist Turkiye highlights Mullen's comments in the headline, "Intelligence Sharing Will Continue." Mainstream NTV emphasized he said, "I see no reason why we should not continue our intelligence cooperation with Turkey. Mainstream Vatan points out Mullen emphasized, "this cooperation will continue under the Obama administration." Mainstream Sabah reports, "Mullen said he valued the importance of his ties to

Turkish General Staff Chief Ilker Basbug and the Turkish military."

Turkey to Buy Herons from Israel

Mainstreams Sabah and Vatan report Defense Minister Vecdi Gonul responded to journalists' questions yesterday regarding reported problems with the purchase and deliver of Heron unmanned aircraft from Israel. Yesterday leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reported that PM Erdogan's recent harsh criticism of Israel may have negatively affected the defense deal. Gonul told journalists, "Our agreement with Israel is still in force. Israel sent two of the Heron aircraft last December. There is a little delay in the delivery, but I think they will send remaining eight aircraft before the end of April."

Greece Sentences Turkish Pilot to 4 Years in Prison over Fighter Jet Crash

Hurriyet, Milliyet and Sabah report a Greek court sentenced a Turkish pilot to four years in prison for his role in a fighter jet crash over the Aegean in 2006. The pilot, First Lt. Halil Ibrahim Ozdemir, was convicted Monday 'in absentia' of killing Greek pilot Costas Iliakis during a game of chicken, characterized as a 'dog fight' by the Turkish press, in the sky. The two pilots sped their planes toward each other, but before their planes collided Ozdemir ejected and thus survived the collision. Ozdemir has 15 days to appeal the sentence, but he reportedly did not even appoint a lawyer.

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Turkey to Build 'Border Dams' against Terror

Islamist-oriented Zaman reports that over the next couple of years, Turkey will build 33 new dams on its borders with neighbors, namely Bulgaria, Greece, Iraq, Iran, Syria and Armenia. Of the 33 dams, 11 will include checkpoints in the border provinces of Hakkari and Sirnak in order to prevent terrorist infiltrations and illegal trafficking says Zaman.

TV News (CNN Turk)

Domestic

- Prime Minister Erdogan denies reports that two new ministries will be set up, saying his priority was reducing the number of ministers in the cabinet.

- On Wednesday, the pro-Kurdish DTP leader Ahmet Turk and Diyarbakir Mayor Osman Baydemir will participate in the "Turkey, The EU and the Kurds" conference to be hosted by the European Parliament in Brussels.

World

- The Greek Cypriot administration will file a complaint to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) to demand legal action against Turkish actor Atilla Olgac. Olgac recently told a Turkish television show that he had killed ten Greek Cypriot prisoners of war in 1974 in Cyprus.

- Greek Foreign Minister Dora Bakoyannis said after meeting with Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari that she supported Iraq's independence and territorial integrity.

- Bulgaria has asked the European Commission to intervene to end the blockade of Greece's main highway network by tractors and trailers because the blockade is preventing the passage of goods.

JEFFREY